DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 779 HE 036 282

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TITLE	Black Admissions to Medical Schools Rebound, Shift toward Private Schools. Focus on Health Professions Education.
INSTITUTION	Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA.
PUB DATE	2003-08-00
NOTE	6p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Black Students; Educational Trends; *Enrollment; Enrollment Trends; Medical Schools; *Medical Students; *Private Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Southern Regional Education Board

ABSTRACT

The number of black students entering medical schools in the member states of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) climbed steadily in the later 1980s and early 1990s and peaked with the entering class in 1996-1997. The numbers slipped after 1996-1997 as the use of minority preferences in admissions to educational programs came under increasing criticism. By 2002-2003, however, the numbers had rebounded. Black students accounted for only a slightly lower percentage of new students at medical schools in 2002-2003 (8.4%) than in 1996-1997 (8.9%). This fact sheet provides additional details on the enrollment of black students in medical schools in SREB states. (SLD)

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David R. Denton

Southern Regional Education Board

August 2003

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Focus *on Health Professions Education*

SREB

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August 2003

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Black admissions to medical schools rebound, shift toward private schools

The number of black students entering medical schools in the SREB states climbed steadily in the late 1980s and early 1990s and peaked with the entering class in 1996-1997. The numbers slipped after 1996-1997 as the use of minority preferences in admissions to educational programs came under increasing criticism. By 2002-2003, however, the numbers had rebounded. (See the table on page 3.)

- The number of new black students enrolling in medical schools in the SREB states in 2002-2003 (478 students) was only 1 percent lower than the number enrolling in 1996-1997 (483 students).
- Black students accounted for a slightly lower percentage of new students at medical schools in 2002-2003 (8.4 percent) than in 1996-1997 (8.9 percent).

While the numbers of entering black students were roughly equivalent, they were a smaller percentage of all entering students in 2002-2003 because the total number of entering students increased by 4 percent between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003. The distribution of entering black students also shifted between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003, with the numbers at public medical schools falling while the numbers at private medical schools increased.

Between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003, the number of black students entering public medical schools decreased by 13 percent, while the number entering predominantly white, private medical schools increased by more than 28 percent and the number entering the region's two historically black, private medical schools (Meharry Medical College in Nashville and Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta) increased by 8 percent. As a result, black students accounted for a smaller percentage of entering students at public medical schools in 2002-2003 than in 1996-1997 (6.4 percent, compared with 7.5 percent) and a larger percentage of entering students at private, predominantly white medical schools (8.6 percent in 2002-2003, compared with 7.3 percent in 1996-1997). The percentage was almost the same in both years at the historically black medical schools.

Black students continued to make up a higher percentage of incoming students in medical schools in the SREB region (8.4 percent in 2002-2003) than in the nation as a whole (7.2 percent in 2002-2003). Black students also continued to represent a much smaller percentage of students entering osteopathic (D.O.) medical schools than of students entering allopathic (M.D.) medical schools. This trend, which is reflected nationwide, has been attributed both to lower public awareness of osteopathic medicine and to a feeling among many black students of not wanting to be "a minority within a minority profession."

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The shift of more black students to private medical schools did not affect all public medical schools equally. The numbers of incoming black students increased at eight of the 32 public medical schools in the SREB states between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003. Especially impressive was the 500 percent increase at the Medical College of Georgia, which had four entering black students in 1996-1997 and 24 in 2002-2003. Black students accounted for 13.3 percent of the entering students at Medical College of Georgia in 2002-2003 — second only to East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine, where 15.3 percent of entering students were black. Florida State University College of Medicine was third; black students accounted for 12.5 percent of the students in the new medical school's first entering class in 2002.

A 1991 SREB report, *Recruitment and Retention of Minority Medical Students in SREB States*, found that most medical schools that enrolled substantial numbers of minority students had admissions systems that emphasized subjective characteristics of the applicants. The successful schools did not ignore students' grades and test scores, but they avoided specifying minimum scores and sought to identify unique characteristics that demonstrated applicants' likelihood to be good physicians.

SREB is interested in reporting on all groups in medical schools and especially would like to be able to report on enrollments of Hispanic students. SREB relies on sources within the professions for data on minority students, however, and the American Medical Association reports data only on Hispanic students they regard as being underrepresented in medicine — specifically, Mexican-Americans and mainland Puerto Ricans. This definition does not represent the increasingly diverse Hispanic population in the SREB states and the nation. The 2000 census counted more than 5 million people in the SREB states who were born in Latin American countries — almost half of them in countries other than Mexico. In four SREB states (Florida, Louisiana, Maryland and Virginia), more than 80 percent of the substantial numbers of Latin American residents were from countries other than Mexico. Unfortunately, no AMA data are collected on Hispanic medical students who are not Mexican-American or mainland Puerto Rican. The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine collects data on all Hispanic students, regardless of country of origin.

These data and more about black enrollments in medical schools are available on the SREB Web site (www.sreb.org) in the health professions section of the Data Library. The site includes data about each medical and osteopathic school in the SREB states.

The health professions section lists educational programs in 24 important health-care fields. These program listings are updated annually and include all available information on program capacity, trends in graduates, and tuition and fees. The site also has data on the numbers of students who are enrolled in health professions programs through the SREB Regional Contract Program. There also is a file that lists the number of first-year medical-residency positions by specialty in each SREB state and calculates the percentages of first-year positions that are in family practice and other primary-care areas.

New First-Year Black Students in Medical Schools in SREB States

	1996-1997			2002-2003			Change in New First-Year Black Students, 1996-1997 to 2002-2003
	Number of Schools	New First-Year Black Students	Percent of All First-Year Students	Number of Schools	New First-Year Black Students	Percent of All First-Year Students	
Public	32	303	7.5%	32	264	6.4%	-12.9%
Doctor of Medicine (M.D.)	29	298	7.9	29	261	6.8	-12.4
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)	3	5	1.8	3	3	0.3	-40.0
Private, predominantly white	11	95	7.3	12	122	8.6	28.4
Doctor of Medicine (M.D.)	10	89	7.7	10	116	9.9	30.3
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)	1	6	3.9	2	6	2.5	0.0
Private, historically black Doctor of Medicine (M.D.)	2	85	74.6	2	92	74.2	8.2
Total	45	483	8.9	46	478	8.4	-1.0

Sources: American Medical Association and American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine.

Prepared by David Denton, SREB director of Health Affairs. For information, contact Joan Lord at (404) 875-9211, Ext. 304, or by e-mail at joan.lord@sreb.org.

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